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## **UKRAINE'S WORKFORCE RESILIENCE: CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES**

People are the key asset of any organization – profit or non-profit, private or public. The future of an institution depends directly on the quality and availability of its workforce. This, in turn, has a decisive impact on the development and well-being of the country as a whole. In recent years, the issue of human resources has become critical not only in terms of qualifications but also in terms of sheer availability. Due to the full-scale war in Ukraine, a significant share of the working-age population has either left abroad, been mobilized etc. At the same time, new challenges are emerging: the growing demand for digital and “green” skills, the widening gender gap in employment, and the urgent need to reintegrate veterans into civilian professions.

Today, the resilience of those who remain and continue to work, build, and innovate is of a significant importance. They are the ones driving Ukraine forward and bringing victory closer in a war. The Ukrainian labor market currently operates under conditions of severe human resource reduction. According to the Ministry of Social Policy, the number of working-age individuals has fallen by 40% compared to pre-war 2021 [1].

Resilience is crucial in such situation because it directly affects the ability to function effectively, respond to constant challenges, and adapt to them. Workforce resilience manifests itself in:

1. Adaptability and flexibility [2]
2. Stress tolerance.
3. Professional reliability.
4. Empathy and teamwork.

Much of workforce sustainability depends on employers. As Teresa Trepachova, Chief People Officer at McDonald's in Ukraine, Czechia, and Slovakia, notes [1]: instead of searching for the “perfect” candidate, employers should focus on creating environments where specialists are trained and developed. Otherwise, access is restricted for young people without experience, older workers, or those returning after long breaks.

Thus, investment in personnel development becomes a strategic response to the challenges of our time. This includes access to learning platforms, workplace inclusion, and adaptation to Ukrainian realities. According to the Ministry of Social Policy, nearly 1 million people with disabilities could be active participants in the labor market, while the number of veterans returning to civilian life grows annually. Despite the objective shortage of personnel, millions of economically active individuals remain outside the labor market. This is one of the main reserves for economic growth:

- about 0.9 million internally displaced persons of working age who are not employed;
- around 2.3 million people with disabilities outside the labor market;
- up to 0.8 million individuals under 60 already receiving pensions but not working;
- women and youth facing barriers to labor market entry [3].

Addressing this requires precise instruments for career initiation, reintegration, or reorientation. One solution is aligning the modern education system with labor market needs, ensuring graduates' skills match demand. Short-term training programs, adult retraining, and close

cooperation between employers, employment services, and educational institutions are particularly important. Equally vital is adaptation to the green and digital transition, which is a priority in the European Union. It is worth to be noted that the EU supports the resilience of Ukraine's workforce during the war and in post-war recovery through projects funded by European programs, in particular *Skills4Recovery*. Their main goal is retraining specialists for new economic realities. The program aims to make vocational education and training attractive for both youth and adults in need of requalification, ensuring they see it as a pathway to decent employment with fair wages.

Employers emphasize that social and communication skills are increasingly important. Ukrainian staff do not always meet European standards, often expecting hierarchical instructions from managers. Employers urge educational institutions to focus more on developing proactivity, teamwork, and project management skills across technical professions. As Michael Paulo, Program Director of *Skills4Recovery*, notes, this is essential for competitiveness [4].

Equally important is a comprehensive support system for veterans, starting with housing and healthcare, but extending to education, accessible materials, psychological support, and teacher training. Career counseling is critical to help individuals identify promising professions and available courses. Current results of *Skills4Recovery* include:

- engagement of 70 vocational institutions across all regions (excluding occupied territories);
- training of 1,400 managers and teachers in project management and inclusivity;
- retraining of 2,500 individuals in construction, logistics, agriculture, and IT at 45 vocational institutions;
- training of 100 HR teams from private companies in inclusive recruitment and workforce adaptation;
- updating the “Education for Veterans” platform with 1,620 available courses [4].

Therefore, ensuring workforce resilience in Ukraine under current conditions is a complex challenge requiring the involvement of diverse stakeholders – government, business, educational institutions, international donors, and partners.

As we can see, workforce resilience in Ukraine is not a response to temporary challenges but a strategic foundation for long-term recovery and sustainable growth. It encompasses adaptability, stress tolerance, professional reliability, and the ability to collaborate empathetically in teams. In the face of war, demographic shifts, and global transformations such as the digital and green transitions, resilience becomes the defining characteristic that allows the labor market to survive, evolve, and thrive. Worth to be mentioned, that strengthening resilience means investing in people – through education, retraining, inclusion, and comprehensive support systems – so that every individual, regardless of background or circumstance, can contribute to rebuilding the country. Ultimately, resilient human capital is the cornerstone of Ukraine's victory and future prosperity.

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